

PURPOSE

The City of Alameda wants to use the Internet to improve its ability to communicate information to residents and businesses, as well as to enhance their ability to communicate with the City, in order to further its mission and goals and better provide its services and programs. One opportunity for doing so is the use of Social Media. Social Media refers to the use of the Internet, particularly websites and other tools that allow persons with access to the Internet (“Users”) to contribute content, with or without third-party control or regulation, which other Users can access. Examples of Social Media are Facebook, Twitter, Nixle, Instagram, Flickr, YouTube, Vimeo, and others.

The use of Social Media by government presents opportunities to enhance communication, and even to create or facilitate new ways for the public to participate in government. At the same time, and for the same reasons, Social Media can be used destructively, to discourage participation and thereby suppress unpopular ideas, and can be hijacked for purposes other than those for which they are intended. Moreover, by using Social Media, the City may be enabling Users to post their own content to City-maintained Social Media sites. Therefore it is critical that the City's use of Social Media – and of each individual Social Media platform – be designed and managed carefully to ensure that it serves its intended purpose. It is equally important that the City retain, and if appropriate exercise, its ability to terminate any given platform if it has ceased to fulfill its intended purpose. For Social Media sites that allow nonCity users to post comments, it is particularly important to define the purpose of the site and of any City content posted to it on which users can comment or to which they can reply. This policy describes how City of Alameda Departments may – and may not – use Social Media, and it establishes internal procedures for the use of Social Media.

Although this policy describes standards for operating various social media tools, it does not cover content, a critical element of success. Staff should note that the effectiveness of any communication relies primarily on the quality, clarity and consistency of the message itself. The platform or tool is simply the means by which the message is delivered.

The City's use of Social media is not intended to replace its existing web presence, but to supplement it as a tool for additional outreach. Social Media is a distribution tool for online content and should be used to link to and drive traffic to www.alamedaca.gov. Departments should use Social Media to link to outside sites only when necessary to provide information that is suitable in City context and cannot be made available in a timely manner from the City's website, such as in rapidly developing, critical situations or emergencies.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

- The City Manager's office will develop City branding and enterprise-wide design standards.
- The PIO will maintain a list of Social Media that are approved for use by City departments.
- The PIO will maintain a list of the City's Social Media sites, including authorized users, login and password information.
- The department's director or designee will inform the PIO of any administrative changes to existing sites.
- The City must be able to immediately edit or remove content from Social Media sites.

- Social media accounts may not represent an individual in their capacity as a City employee, they must only represent a Department or the City.
- Any department that wants to use Social Media must designate a primary person and two backups to that role. Such designations must be kept up to date.
- A department that wants to use Social Media must have a media plan that encompasses all of its existing publications, such as news releases, newsletters, public notices, etc.

The following social media tools have been approved by the City: Twitter, Facebook, Next Door, LinkedIn, Nixle and the posting of videos on Youtube and Vimeo. The use of other sites must be approved by the City Manager or designee.

Use of Social Media By Departments

1. The City's website (<http://www.alamedaca.gov>) will remain the City's primary and predominant Internet presence.
2. The most appropriate use of Social Media is as informational channels to increase the City's ability to broadcast its online messages to the widest possible audience.
3. It should be noted on all Social Media sites that posts do not represent the Official position of the City.
4. Content posted to the City's Social Media sites will also be made available on the City's website as appropriate.
5. Content posted to the City's Social Media sites must contain hyperlinks directing users back to the City's official website for in-depth information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the City, when such information exists on the website.
6. As is the case for the City's website, the department's director or designee will be responsible for the content and upkeep (including maintenance and monitoring) of any Social Media site that department may create.
7. User comments must be monitored on a regular and frequent basis.
8. Content must be posted to Social Media sites on a regular or frequent basis.
9. The City's Social Media sites will contain records subject to the California Public Records Act. The Department maintaining a Social Media site is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public records request for such public records, and shall promptly consult with the City Attorney's Office when such requests are received. Such sites shall clearly indicate that any articles and any other content posted or submitted for posting may be subject to public disclosure upon request. Users shall be notified that public disclosure requests must be directed to the relevant department's director or designee.
10. California law and relevant City records retention schedules apply to Social Media content. Departments maintaining Social Media sites shall preserve records required to be maintained pursuant to the City's records retention schedule.
11. Visitors to a Department's Social Media site shall be notified of the intended purpose of that site.
12. Any exceptions to these policies will be approved by the PIO, dependent on the policy.

CONTENT

The City of Alameda disclaims liability for ads, videos, promoted content or comments accessible from any external web page. The responsibility for external content or comments rests with the organizations or individuals providing them. Any inclusion of external content or comments on social media sites does not imply endorsement by the City of Alameda. Comments posted to this site will be monitored during regular City business hours only. The City disclaims any and all responsibility and liability for

inappropriate content posted to its social media sites that cannot be immediately be removed.

The following types of content are prohibited to both administrators and commenters on Social Media sites operated by the City, and the City reserves the right to remove any such content as soon as possible without notice:

- User-generated content unrelated to the stated purpose of the Social Media site and not topically related to City programs, services, projects, issues, events and activities, or the particular post being commented upon;
- Obscene content, “fighting words” or terrorist threats as defined by the California Penal Code;
- Defamatory statements as defined by applicable law;
- Posts and comments that include vulgar, offensive, threatening or harassing language, personal attacks or unsupported accusations;
- Obscene or sexual content or links to obscene or sexual content illegal activity or encouragement of illegal activity;
- Political statements, including comments that endorse or oppose political candidates or ballot propositions;
- Religious statements, including comments that endorse or oppose any type of religious opinions or activities;
- Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
- Private, personal information published without consent of the individual identified;
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party;
- Advocacy with respect to specific political parties, candidates elected or appointed officials, or ballot measures, whether local, state or national;
- Solicitations for commerce, and posts and comments that promote or advertise commercial services, entities or products except as stipulated in City marketing plans and determined by the City to be essential to economic development;
- Photos or other images that fall in any of the above categories; and
- Links to materials or external sites that fall under one of the aforementioned categories.

All comments and private messages received via City of Alameda Social Media sites are public records and subject to public disclosure.

The City reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available in accordance with the City’s policy on the retention of such information.

Appeals

In the event the City decides not to display a posting on social media, an aggrieved person may submit a written appeal within seven (7) days to the PIO. A decision by the PIO may be appealed in writing to the City Manager within ten (10) days of issuance the appeal decision. The decision of the City Manager is final.

Endorsements

Social Media include various tools that endorse or validate posts by others, including, but not limited to, the ability to “follow”, “like”, or “favorite” on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or Flickr. City Social Media tools will not be used to endorse in this manner political parties or campaigns or any sort, elected or appointed officials, candidates for public office, or ballot measures. City Social Media will not be used to endorse products or companies that seek commercial gain.

Entering Into Contracts for Social Media

Most online sites require users to agree to terms of service that include such provisions as:

- 1) Indemnification and Defense. When a public agency creates an account on a social media site, it typically must agree not to sue the site, nor allow the site to be included in suits against the agency. Many sites also require the account owner to pay the site’s legal costs arising from such suits.
- 2) Applicable law and venue. Most terms of service also assert that a certain state’s laws (usually California, but not necessarily always) apply to the terms of use and that state’s courts will adjudicate disputes.

Some companies are willing to negotiate on the substantive provisions in the terms of use, but they may be hesitant to negotiate separate agreements with dozens of agencies.

The terms of service represent a binding contract; responsible department staff should assure that they have taken the steps necessary to bind the agency to such an agreement.

The City Manager or designee will approve the use of any social media platform.

Social Media Accounts as of September 12

- Twitter @CityofAlameda
- Facebook /CityofAlameda
- Nextdoor